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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 000513

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ETRD](#) [EINV](#) [EAID](#) [KPAO](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [MZ](#)  
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT INCREASINGLY SENSITIVE ABOUT DEMOCRACY  
CONCERNS

REF: A. MAPUTO 490  
[1](#)B. MAPUTO 493

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Todd C. Chapman, Reasons 1.4(b+d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Charge d'Affaires met with Minister of the Presidency Antonio Sumbana recently to discuss democracy and governance issues. Responding strongly, Sumbana denied that FRELIMO intentionally dominates the political landscape limiting opposition politics, press freedom, and economic freedom. Sumbana described Daviz Simango and the new Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) as "mercenaries," with little allegiance to their former RENAMO party. Sumbana also called on the United States and other developed countries to tread lightly in this election year, suggesting that continued pressure on democracy and governance issues could result in instability. The Charge encouraged Sumbana to embrace the development of a stronger opposition party as an opportunity to modernize FRELIMO, as called for by some within FRELIMO. With examples of Zimbabwe and Madagascar in the recent past, Guebuza and FRELIMO party are showing signs of growing concern about the likely challenge from Daviz Simango in the upcoming national elections scheduled for October 28, 2009. END SUMMARY.

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SUMBANA REQUESTS MORE BREATHING SPACE IN FRAGILE TIME  
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[1](#)2. (C) In an April 13 one-on-one meeting with Minister of the Presidency Antonio Sumbana, the Charge discussed a wide range of topics related to democracy and governance, prompted by his reading of an advance courtesy copy of a USAID-funded Democracy and Governance assessment recently completed that is quite critical of FRELIMO and the status of Mozambican democracy. Sumbana asked the Charge to explain why developed countries appeared intent on "asphyxiating" the ruling FRELIMO party, singling out the USG and the British for highlighting weaknesses in its democratic institutions. (Note: The GRM remains sensitive to the critiques contained in our annual Human Rights Report. End Note) Sumbana asked the Charge not to judge FRELIMO for the shortcomings of the main opposition party RENAMO. He reiterated a line used before, which is why should FRELIMO be held responsible for the weakness of the opposition? "We win because our party works hard," he said. He continued that RENAMO had a weak leader in Afonso Dhlakama, who was the one really to blame for the opposition's weakness. Nevertheless, he continued, Mozambique remains a young country which had made great strides in consolidating the peace following the end of the country's civil war in 1992. Sumbana cautioned against pressing democracy and governance issues, describing this national election year as a "fragile time," and raising

concerns that diplomatic pressure could create instability and promote a similar situation to Zimbabwe here in Mozambique.

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MDM PORTRAYED AS MERCENARIES  
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¶4. (C) Referring to the newly-formed Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) and its leader Daviz Simango, Sumbana asked, "Why do you trust these mercenaries?" When pressed to explain, Sumbana suggested that MDM was simply a party of defectors from the RENAMO camp, and that the party would be better-perceived in Mozambique if it did not have links to RENAMO. Sumbana explained that FRELIMO wanted strong opposition party politics that challenged the ideas of the ruling party, but also opposition that "behaved properly." The Charge suggested to Sumbana that FRELIMO modernize and accept strong opposition party politics as a positive step for the country instead of trying to squelch dissent, reiterating that we do not support individual political parties, but rather the integrity of the political process.

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SUMBANA REJECTS CRITIQUES ON GOVERNANCE  
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¶5. (C) The Charge raised examples of perceived dominance of the FRELIMO party, particularly press freedom. He indicated that according to several sources, independent paper Zambeze, which has a reputation for fearlessly covering stories on graft and corruption that are often embarrassing to the ruling party, is under pressure to alter its reporting or shut down. Also, the Charge expressed concern that the sole independent print and TV media outlet, STV/Soico may have

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been co-opted by FRELIMO (ref A). Press censorship in general continues to be an issue, he said, with many journalists expressing concern for their safety and actively self-censoring (septel). Sumbana rejected these claims, asking for specific evidence of the ruling-party's role in restricting press freedom, suggesting that Mozambique simply suffered from an unsophisticated media that specialized in personal attacks.

¶6. (C) The Charge then raised the economic dominance of FRELIMO, suggesting that Mozambican and foreign business representatives claim it very difficult to have a successful business in Mozambique without strong ties to the ruling party. Sumbana stated that it was natural for foreign businessmen to wish to form relationships with people of influence and power in the GRM. Nevertheless, he continued, not a single investment in the country had been rejected due to ties with opposition party members. "Many companies here work together with RENAMO." The Charge continued by raising concerns about new labor regulations passed in late 2008 known as Law 55 (ref B) which establishes ten percent maximum quotas on the number of foreigners that businesses can hire in Mozambique, potentially turning away significant foreign investment. The Charge pointed to our Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) as a possible solution covering U.S. investments, to which Sumbana appeared amenable (septel).

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COMMENT: FRELIMO APPEARS THIN-SKINNED IN ELECTION YEAR  
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¶7. (C) Sumbana is a sophisticated political player, so his strong reactions on a host of democracy and governance issues suggests that senior FRELIMO leaders are increasingly concerned about political challenger Daviz Simango, the MDM leader and only opposition-party mayor left in Mozambique. There remains a large untapped reservoir of social and economic discontent within Mozambique, a phenomenon briefly evidenced in the civic riots in Maputo in February 2008. A

nervous FRELIMO understands that if these sentiments are tapped by an emerging political party, it could be in for a surprising challenge. Warding off that domestic challenge, while keeping the international community silenced or at bay, will be the FRELIMO/GRM strategy. Through the sharing of the Democracy and Governance Assessment, targeted programs, and public appearances, we intend to continue to advocate for democracy and governance issues with the goal of bolstering multi-party democracy in Mozambique.

Chapman